586 "damos" wives and innkeepers, offering bed, board and home comforts
548 to traders and transients. By treating some customers well, they hope to find another husband. When no clients are available, they still earn some income by brewing beer and selling it. They wash themselves and their clothing far more often than peasant women, and pay servants to do the heavy labor and cleaning for them. They leave their children with their kinfolk, sometimes sending money. If she were to remain with her kinfolk herself, family pressure would be great for her to remarry quickly, very likely a more undesirable husband than the first.

587 If and when she does remarry, she usually has few of the social safeguards of her first, virgin marriage. There are no "mis" to protect her, the "manfis gubaé" will not be as sympathetic in marital disputes, and the new husband may take her far away from her kinfolk. But by this time she has matured, at least in experience, and is far more capable of protecting her own interests, economically as well as emotionally, than in her first marriage.

5. The Age of Dominance: The Elder:

888 The term "shemagelyé" signifies an elder; serious, wise, past the prime of physical strength but more energetic and persistent in determining and commanding human relations, particularly within the residential kin group, than ever before. He is treated with great respect.

887 He is one of the dominant elders who rule the kin group, parcel out land for usufruct to biological family units, make decisions in marriage negotiations and other personal affairs involving the family. In town, they act as judges on higher levels. Among the

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

887 mobility they have moved as high in position as their inherited potential allows.

886 In appearance he usually grows a chin beard, which comes late, usually not before the age of thirty, and is greying when a man becomes a "shemagalyē" at about 40. At that time he is usually a grandfather.

As ruler at the apex of his own social pyramid, he is limited only by direct physical strength, in which no one expects him to excel. But if a former warrior, he may be vain and not admit his fading physical strength, and try to show that he can still hold up against young men in warlike games. This is the only time when an elder is occasionally mocked, as "ənbärrə" (lit. he struts).

888 Dependency in old age is no problem among rural kin groups living on settled land, whether their own or rented. Even in senility, the elder is respected and cared for; even when, as he himself admits, he is "good only for guarding chickens" (tərtəo alä" - become senile).

888 792 However, dependency of an old woman is a more difficult problem, though she, too, is generally cared for. But since she has no functions of leadership, her status lacks the positive, if she becomes a widow, and is too weak to perform the household labors [145] of women. Also, woman fade physically more rapidly than men. As a result, the "ənbəlat" or "bəltət", a greying woman past menopause, or widow of serious mind and spirit, often takes vows as a nun, wears the "qob" of a nun though continuing in her old residence, and spends much time in the churchyard, working in the "betelehem" hut where beer and bread for church use are prepared. Nuns are always old women, partly because it is not considered proper for a

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

532 of the evil eye. Another possible explanation is that centuries ago this symbolism was adopted from Armenian paintings; which is not surprising in view of early, though interrupted contacts between Byzantine and Coptic church art, and later on even Persian and Indian contacts (footnote 101). The amazing realism of natural objects may possibly be of ancient origin, and has survived the emphasis on highly formalised composition enforced by the church.

Scenes depicting everyday life ("abore"), or the famous motif showing the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon (mentioned in the Bible), are also painted on gourds, the useful utensil with the smooth surface. But only the well-to-do or noble families can afford this; (also the tourist). Sometimes the secular motifs show figures of famous military warlords and provincial dynastic heads of the past; and simple, incised geometric figures pleasing to the traditional feudal lord whose appreciation of art wanted direct, simple, and realistic portrayal.

4. Amhara Ideas about Nature and Mankind.

887 812 While his material culture is limited, speculation about the structure, function, and most of all meaning, of the non-material world ranges unfettered in the Amhara culture pattern. Moreover, it is freely expressed, evidencing deep thought, but primarily a wonderment. Often there is a sensitivity that resembles Weltschmerz. This wondering out loud affects most Amhara men when they reach the "shemagalye" (elder) stage, and is one of the most frequently and intensely expressed subjects of their conversation; while at younger ages they are too

Footnote 101 - Mollet, G.: Note (in) Aethiopica, Vol. 3 pp. 191-2 New York, 1935.

887 preoccupied with the immediate demands of life. The culture pattern
812 encourages the shemagalye to give much time and effort to this wonderment, for it belongs to his prime role and social duty at this stage: the accumulation of wisdom. The church does not interfere with this wonderment and its expression, partly because it has not bothered to establish dogma on many subjects.

A. The Natural Universe.

821 In many ways the Amhara concept of the universe resembles that of
[[71]] early medieval Europe, plus understandable similarities to the Middle East and Africa. Some conceptualizations are elaborations from the Biblical universe, readily recognizable because almost always the Geez language is used to express them. Other conceptualisations are animistic, and usually employ Cushitic terminology.

The universe is regarded as a Ptolemaic system, with the earth as the fixed center around which the sun turns. A distinction is made between the physical world, called simply "arät mäzän" (lit. the 4 corners); and the world populated by all creatures, "aläm" (lit. world, in the Geez language). The persistence of this traditional view of a flat earth is so great that even Amhara schoolteachers in the modern elementary schools in the provinces, who are required to teach a spherical earth, privately admit that they don't believe it themselves!

Heavenly bodies and meteorological phenomena are interpreted as directly related to human events. Venus is called "astärboshäsh" or "astäryo", (lit. the one who gives hunger and then flees), because the planet appears in the very brief dusk, when the heat of the day is over and one gets hungry. Because Venus is "fleeing and inconstant like a woman", she is given the feminine gender.

821 Considerable attention is given to the moon ("charäqa"), for it
243 is believed to cause the ripening of the grain after the sun has